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091651Z Dec 05

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 001867

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STATE FOR AF/W
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/08/2015

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SUBJECT: IMPEACHMENT AFFIRMED, BAYELSA GOVERNOR ARRESTED

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for Reason 1.4 (D)

11. (U) Apparently at the urging of the Federal Government, impeachment proceedings against the Bayelsa State governor moved at lightning speed with the Speaker of the State Assembly announcing today that Governor Alamieyeseigha has been impeached. The impeachment removed the constitutional shield of immunity that had protected the governor. Alamieyeseigha was quickly arrested and taken by security agents to an unknown destination. Some media reports he has been flown to Abuja and may soon be returned to London to face trial over money laundering charges. Other sources indicate that he is still in Yenagoa. Following his arrest, police and military personnel took over the governor's offices and began patrolling major roads in the capital.

12. (U) Mission sources report that after the Speaker announced that seventeen members of the twenty-four member House had voted for impeachment the legislators were moved under armed escort to neighboring Rivers State.

13. (C) According to the Nigeria Constitution, the House could only move to impeachment after receiving the report of a seven-person panel established by the State Chief Justice to investigate the allegations against Alamieyeseigha. That panel was set up on December 5. It is unknown whether the legislature received the panel's report prior to voting on the impeachment.

14. (C) Comment: The House action came quickly and was likely spurred by Abuja. A lingering constitutional question is whether the House action was predicated on the panel's report. If not, the House acted unconstitutionally. But in the entire episode both sides have ignored the parts of the law that inconvenienced them. Perhaps of greater consequence will be the reaction of Alamieyeseigha's Ijaw brethren. The Ijaw militias could cause significant trouble if sufficiently provoked. Their reaction will reveal whether they look at him as a genuine champion of the Ijaws or were they just opportunistically at his side as long as he had deep pockets.

Apparently, his opponents in Bayelsa and in Abuja are betting on the latter. End comment.

BROWNE